CROSSGEN CHRONICLES
MINI-SERIES
1 OF 2 FEB
$2.95
$4.50 CAN
www.crossgen.com
SAURIANS
UNNATURAL SELECTION
Mark Waid
Andrea Di Vito
Rob Hunter
Wil Quintana

IT WAS A MASSACRE.

Over four hundred years ago, the human worlds of the Planetary Union became enmeshed in a war against the lizard-like Saurians of T'charun—a war the humans could not help but win. Time and again, the Saurian encampments fell victim to human technology, human strategy, human cunning. Mankind's victory was assured.

But a single Saurian's dilemma would change all that...

Saurians™: Unnatural Selection Vol. 1, Issue 1, FEBRUARY 2002. FIRST PRINTING. Published by CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. Office of publication, 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, Florida 34677. **CrossGen®**, **CrossGen Comics®**, **CrossGeneration®**, and **CrossGeneration Comics®** are registered trademarks of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. **Saurians™**, **Sigil™**, **the CrossGen sigil™**, and all prominent characters are ™ and © 2002 CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. The entire contents of this book are ™ and © 2002 CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. The stories, incidents, and characters in this publication are fictional. Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reproduced in any form without the express written consent of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

From the poison in your fangs,
To the sharpness of your claws,
To the armor of your skin,
I create you, free from flaws.
Blessed Saurian, born to battle,
In the sacrament of War,
Know your body is your weapon,
You require nothing more.
The Song of Khyalhtua
I REMEMBER REPEATING THOSE STANZAS OVER AND OVER IN MY HEAD, PRAYING THAT THE WORDS OF THE WAR-GODDESS WERE INDEED TRUE.
FOR I WAS EMPTY-HANDED AND MY ENEMIES WERE UPON ME.

IT SEEMED LIKE SOME CRUEL JOKE OF NATURE.
THE MAMMALS LOOKED SO **SOFT** AND **WEAK**, LACKING ALL THE VISIBLE HALLMARKS OF SUCCESSFUL HUNTERS.
WE SAURIANS, ON THE OTHER HAND, COMBINED ALL THE BEST TRAITS FROM A WORLD FILLED WITH PREDATORS.
SO **HOW**, I WONDERED, COULD WE POSSIBLY HAVE LOST EVERY SINGLE BATTLE AGAINST THIS, THE FIRST ALIEN RACE WE HAD EVER ENCOUNTERED?
THAT WAS OVER FOUR HUNDRED ORBITS AGO, WHEN OUR WAR WITH THE MAMMALS WAS STILL FAIRLY NEW...
...WHEN MY **FAITH** WAS FIRST PUT TO THE TEST.

BUT AT THE MOMENT, IT SEEMED THAT ONLY MY LIFE WAS AT RISK.
THE TIME FOR HIDING WAS OVER. I HAD TO USE THE WEAPONS KHYALHTUA HAD BLESSED ME WITH...
...NO MATTER HOW MUCH IT TURNED MY STOMACH.
SyNcKk!
RATATATATAT
BRAATT
POP POP
BLAM

FOCUS, PATIENCE, CONTROL. IN DIVINITY SCHOOL I'D LEARNED THAT THESE WERE THE KEYS TO VICTORY WITH HONOR.
BRRRAAAT
POP
POP
THAT WAS BEFORE I WAS DRAFTED AND THRUST INTO A WAR WHERE IT SEEMED THAT HONOR HAD NO PLACE.
SPLISHHHHH
FWOOOSH
THIS WAR WAS ONLY ABOUT ONE THING: SURVIVAL.
SO BE IT. WE SAURIANS ARE NOTHING IF NOT SURVIVORS.

HSSS!
THEY THOUGHT TO TRAP ME. WHAT THEY SAW AS MY DOOM, I SAW AS MY ESCAPE.
ONE GOOD BREATH, AND I COULD SWIM TO FREEDOM UNDER COVER OF THE FLAMES.
IF ONLY I WASN'T ALREADY WEAKENED -- NOT HAVING EATEN SINCE LONG BEFORE I WAS SEPARATED FROM MY SQUAD.
STILL, MY GREATEST TREASURE WAS NOT LOST, SO I CLUNG TO HOPE.

pOp pOp
BLAM
DESPERATION DROVE ME BEYOND MY BETTER JUDGMENT...
...WHILE THE MAMMALS WERE DRIVEN BY BLIND HATRED.
NEITHER PATH BEARS FOLLOWING.

Combat is a river dark,
The current fast and frigid.
It flows around the reed that bends,
Yet sweeps away the rigid.

The Song of Khyalhtua

FOR GOD'S SAKE, SWITCH ON THE VOX! MAKE HIM UNDERSTAND!
KILL US, AND THERE'LL BE NO ONE LEFT TO WORK THE NAVIGATOR.
YOU'LL BE LOST -- AND AS GOOD AS DEAD!

THEY WERE SHREWD ENOUGH TO APPEAL TO MY INTELLIGENCE. NEVERTHELESS, I HESITATED FOR HOURS, UNSURE IF I COULD TRUST THEM.
REACTIVATE THE DEVICE! I WANT TO UNDERSTAND YOUR CHATTER!
WANTS TO LISTEN TO US, TO MAKE SURE WE'RE NOT SCHEMING AGAINST HIM.
AT EASE, DUDE. WE WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT THE ZYGORS. WE'RE ALL SCREWED IF WE JUST KEEP SITTING HERE.
THEIR SOFT, SWEATY FACES ALL LOOKED THE SAME TO ME. I HADN'T A CLUE IF THAT WAS FEAR OR DECEPTION IN THEIR EYES.
...ZYGORS...?
HE DOESN'T KNOW.
THEY DIDN'T BRIEF YOU?! MAN, I DON'T BELIEVE IT. THE ZYGORS, MAN! THEY LOOK KINDA LIKE THIS, ONLY BIG AS AN ORBITAL TROOP TRANSPORT!
THEY HAVE LITTLE HOOKS ON THEIR TONGUES THAT STRIP THE MEAT RIGHT OFF YOUR BONES.
JUST ONE ADULT COULD EAT US ALL, AND HAVE THAT FLAME-THROWER FOR DESSERT!
I'D SEEN NO SPOOR, NO TRACE OF SUCH A BEAST...BUT THE MAMMALS HAD COLONIZED THIS WORLD LONG BEFORE MY BATALLION EVER LANDED HERE.
THEY'RE NOCTURNAL. WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME. WE'D LIKE TO PROPOSE A BARGAIN.

BARGAIN?
OUR BASE CAMPS AREN'T TOO FAR APART
A KLIK MAYBE TWO, WITH A NO MAN'S LAND IN BETWEEN
WE FIGURE WE'RE A GOOD DAY'S HIKE AWAY BUT WE'LL MAKE ALL OF US BACK TO THE NEUTRAL ZONE IF YOU PROMISE NOT TO KILL US
DEAL?
ZYGORS, MAN
IT WAS TRUE. I DID HEAR SOMETHING APPROACHING
SEVERAL SOMETHINGS
I TRIED TO WEIGH MY OPTIONS WISELY, BUT I WAS NO TACTICIAN
THE ONLY PREVIOUS COMBAT I'D KNOWN WAS RITUAL SPARRING. THIS WAS ALL FAR TOO REAL
SO MY THOUGHTS TURNED TO THE SCRIPTURES THAT HAD EVER BEEN MY GUIDE AND THE ANSWER CAME AT ONCE
Of all the forms of victory,
The highest on the tally
Belongs to he who turns a
Vanquished foe into an ally.
The Song of Khyalhtua

AS WE MARCHED MY FEAR OF WHAT STALKED US GRADUALLY GAVE WAY TO THE AWE I FELT AT SEEING THESE BEINGS UP CLOSE
JUST AS THEY COULD NOT RECOGNIZE MY OWN MOST IMPORTANT POSSESSION I WONDERED WHAT CRUCIAL DETAIL I MIGHT BE OVERLOOKING ON THEM
I TRIED TO MEMORIZE ALL OF THEIR FASCINATING, BAFFLING FEATURES
SUCH AS THE FINE FLEECY STRANDS THAT GREW FROM THEIR HEADS
OR THE DISCOLORATION ON THAT ONE'S NECK SOMETHING I WOULD LATER LEARN THEY CALL A BIRTHMARK
WHEN THE POINT MAN SIGNALED THAT HE'D HEARD SOMETHING WE WAITED WHILE HE SCOUTED THE WAY AHEAD

I ADMIRED HIS COURAGE AND WORRIED FOR HIS SAFETY
AND THAT WAS WHEN IT HIT ME
DESPITE OUR DIFFERENCES WE HAD BEEN UNITED BY FEAR
YO
WHAT HAPPENED?
IT MUST BE A ZYGOR NEARBY! I RAN INTO ONE OF ITS KILLS
I HAD TO SEE FOR MYSELF -- TO PROVE THEY COULD BE TRUSTED
I WAS ACTUALLY RELIEVED TO SEE THAT THE CARCASS WAS STRIPPED TO THE BONE JUST AS THEY SAID IT WOULD BE
AND I KNEW RIGHT THEN AND THERE THAT IF WE EVER MADE IT HOME ALIVE
I WOULD DEDICATE MYSELF TO ENDING THIS WAR WITH NO PURPOSE
AND NO HONOR

WE STOPPED WHEN THEY COULD GO NO FURTHER. BY THEN, MY ACHING HUNGER MADE ME NEARLY AS WEAK AS THEM
BUT UNLIKE THE MAMMALS WITH THEIR QUICK METABOLISMS, I COULD NOT RISK A NAP FROM WHICH ONLY THE HEAT OF THE SUN COULD AWAKEN ME
SO I OPENED THE PRECIOUS TUBE CLIPPED TO MY BELT AND SOUGHT THE ONLY REAL SUSTENANCE I'D BROUGHT WITH ME
K-CHK
RELAX! I JUST WANNA TALK. WAY? JUST JUST
YOU, uh YOU GOT A NAME?
TERCHAC
TERCH
TER CH
TERCHAC!
MY TONGUE
I'M PEPO
WHAT'S THAT? A LETTER FROM YOUR GIRLFRIEND?
HARDLY. IT'S THE SONG OF KHYALHTUA, OUR MOST SACRED SCROLL.
I STUDIED FOR THE PRIESTHOOD. I WAS A GOOD PUPIL, TOO, AND YET I CANNOT FIND ONE GOOD REASON WHY WE MUST DESTROY EACH OTHER

BEATS ME. I ALWAYS GOT TOLD *YOU GUYS* STARTED IT
NOT THAT I BELIEVE EVERYTHING THE POLITICIANS AND GENERALS SAY PERSONALLY, I FIGURE IT COMES DOWN TO JUST *ONE THING*
SURVIVAL WE WANNA *LIVE*
AT LEAST WE CAN BOTH AGREE ON *THAT*
TRUE. SO, HOW'S A *PRIEST* FEEL ABOUT BEING A *SOLDIER*? I MEAN, DON'T YOUR PRESTS BELIEVE THAT LIFE'S, LIKE *SACRED*?
NOT *ALL* COMBAT ENDS IN DEATH. WE USUALLY FIGHT TO *STRENGTHEN*, NOT KILL EACH OTHER.
EVEN IF YOU *MUST* TAKE A LIFE, THE GODS OF MY PEOPLE *SMILE* UPON A GOOD, CLEAN KILL.
BUT NOT A *WASTEFUL* SLAUGHTER.
THERE HASN'T BEEN A SHRED OF FOCUS, PATIENCE OR CONTROL IN *ANYTHING* I'VE SEEN SINCE MY CONSCRIPTION.

THEN SOMETHING RUSTLED OUT IN THE FOREST AND NAKED FEAR SWEPT ACROSS MY COMPANION'S FACE
IN JUST A FEW HOURS I'D COME A LONG WAY IN READING THEIR SIMIAN FEATURES
GUYS! WAKE UP!
THIS TIME, NOT ONLY COULD I HEAR IT, I COULD SEE MOVEMENT IN THE BRUSH
IF THE ZYGOR HAD OUR SCENT THEN IT WAS SURELY THICK WITH TERROR
COME ON! LET'S GET OUTTA HERE!

THE MORNING SUN AND THE PERVASIVE HUMIDITY SAPPED THE ANIMALS EVEN AS IT ENERGIZED ME
AS THEIR PACE SLOWED I COULD HEAR OUR PURSUIT STALKING CLOSER AND CLOSER
OH OH
WHAT'S WRONG?
WE'RE SCREWED
THEY CHATTERED USELESSLY HAVING LED US TO OUR DOOM AND I JUST WANTED TO SCREAM
BECAUSE THE SOUNDS APPROACHING FROM BEHIND US MADE IT CLEAR THAT MY INSIGHTS WOULD SOON DIE WITH ME, AND THIS MOCKERY OF A WAR WOULD GRIND MINDLESSLY ON

DO SOMETHING!
YEAH, OR ELSE GIVE ME THE FLAMETHROWER!
NO! HE'S STRONGER THAN ALL OF US... HE'S GOT THE BEST CHANCE!
SCREW THE WAR. SCREW EVERYTHING! I WANT TO LIVE!

COME ON, TERSHACH! IF YOUR GODS WANT A GOOD KILL, THEN THIS IS IT!
BUT NOW! WHILE YOU'VE ST... GOT A CHANCE! IT WON'T EXPECT YOU TO ATTACK IT!

YOU CAN DO THIS. JUST KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN, CHARGE AND SQUEEZE THAT TRIGGER UNTIL THE THINGS ALL OUT OF FUEL.
AND KEEP YOUR EYES SHUT IN CASE THERE'S ANY BACK SPRAY, OKAY? GOOD JOB, PAL.

HOW DID A FOOLISH INTERPLANETARY WAR LEAD TO THIS MOMENT?
I PRAYED TO BLESSED KHALHTUA FOR COURAGE

I CLOSED MY EYES, PULLED THE TRIGGER AND HOPED MY RECKLESS CHARGE WOULD BE ENOUGH
FWAAA

AND SAW THE SOLDIERS OF MY OWN SQUAD

BURNT TO CINDERS, EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM

THE MAMMALS WERE NOWHERE TO BE SEEN AND SUDDENLY I KNEW
THERE WAS NEVER A ZYGOR
THE MAMMALS KNEW MY SQUAD WAS ON THEIR HEELS. SO THEY CREW THE PICTURE, THEY STOKED THE FLAMES OF MY FEAR
AND THE ONE WITH THE BIRTHMARK EVEN KILLED THE ANIMAL I SAW AND FLAYED THE FLESH FROM ITS BONES ALL TO FURTHER THE LIE
THIS WAS MY PUNISHMENT FOR LACKING FAITH IN THE WAR
THIS WAS ALSO KHYALHTUA'S BITTER LESSON FOR ME. THAT THESE CREATURES LACKED ANY SHRED OF HONOR
TOO LATE I REALIZED WHY WE MUST KILL THEM ALL

HSSS!
SHLUTCH
KLUDD
SHRAKT
SHLUK

YES, I FINALLY KNEW BUT AT WHAT COST? I WAS EVEN WEAKER THAN BEFORE
DELIRIOUS FROM BLOOD LOSS AND THE HUNGER, LIKE A BLACK HOLE IN MY GUT
NOT EVEN MY SQUAD'S SUPPLIES COULD HELP ME ANY FOOD THEY CARRIED WAS NOW REDUCED TO ASH
MY WHOLE LIFE HAD LED TO THESE FIVE MINUTES OF SLAUGHTER
MY WHOLE LIFE
STILL I KNEW I WOULD LIVE NO MATTER WHAT IT TOOK
THE GODDESS HAD PROVIDED ALL I NEEDED TO MAKE THE JOURNEY AND I WOULD MAKE IT BACK
KLAK KLAK
WOOSH
BECAUSE WE SAURIANS ARE IF NOTHING ELSE

SURVIVORS
AT LAST STRENGTH RETURNED TO MY LIMBS MY BELLY FILLED WITH MEAT EVEN AS MY HEARTS FILLED WITH HORROR
BUT I WOULD SOMEHOW MAKE PEACE WITH THIS
I WOULD WASH THE TAINT FROM MY MOUTH AND RETURN TO THE WAR I KNEW TO BE JUST
IN THE END THIS TEST OF FAITH WOULD GIVE ME NEW WISDOM

AND CHANGE ME IN WAYS I COULD NEVER HAVE FORSEEN
Combat always leaves its mark,
But scars should bring no sorrow.
Wise warriors know a loss today
Brings victory tomorrow.
The Song of Khyalhtua

Mark
WAID WITH
Tony
BEDARD
WRITERS
Andrea
DI VITO
PENCILER
Rob
HUNTER
INKER
Wil
QUINTANA
COLORIST
Dave
LANPHEAR
Troy
PETERI
LETTERERS
The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa
Mark Alessi
Publisher & CEO
Gina M. Villa
Chief Operating Officer
Michael A. Beattie
Chief Financial Officer
Tony Panaccio
Vice President
Product Development
Brandon Peterson
Vice President
Production Control
Chris Onrr
Director of
Marketing & Sales
James Braithell
Director of
Marketing & Distribution
Ian M. Feller
Director of
Corporate Communications
Barbara Kesel
Head Writer
Bart Sears
Art Director
Pam Davies
Production Director
Sylvia Bretz
Janet Bechtle
Production Assistants
Dave Lanphear
Design Director
Troy Peteri
Design Assistant
Michelle Pagliaro
Freelance Coordinator

CROSSGEN COMICS
MINI-SERIES
2
OF 2
MAR
$2.95
$4.50 CAN
www.crossgen.com
SAURIANS
UNNATURAL SELECTION
Mark Waid
Andrea Di Vito
Rob Hunter
Wil Quintana

EVOLUTION'S MASTERS!

Over four hundred years ago, the human worlds of the Planetary Union became enmeshed in a war against the lizardlike Saurians of Tcharun. The humans—far more technologically and militarily advanced than the Saurians—were guaranteed victory...

...until a Saurian named Terchac accidentally uncovered a critical secret that put horrifying truth to these words:

You are what you eat...

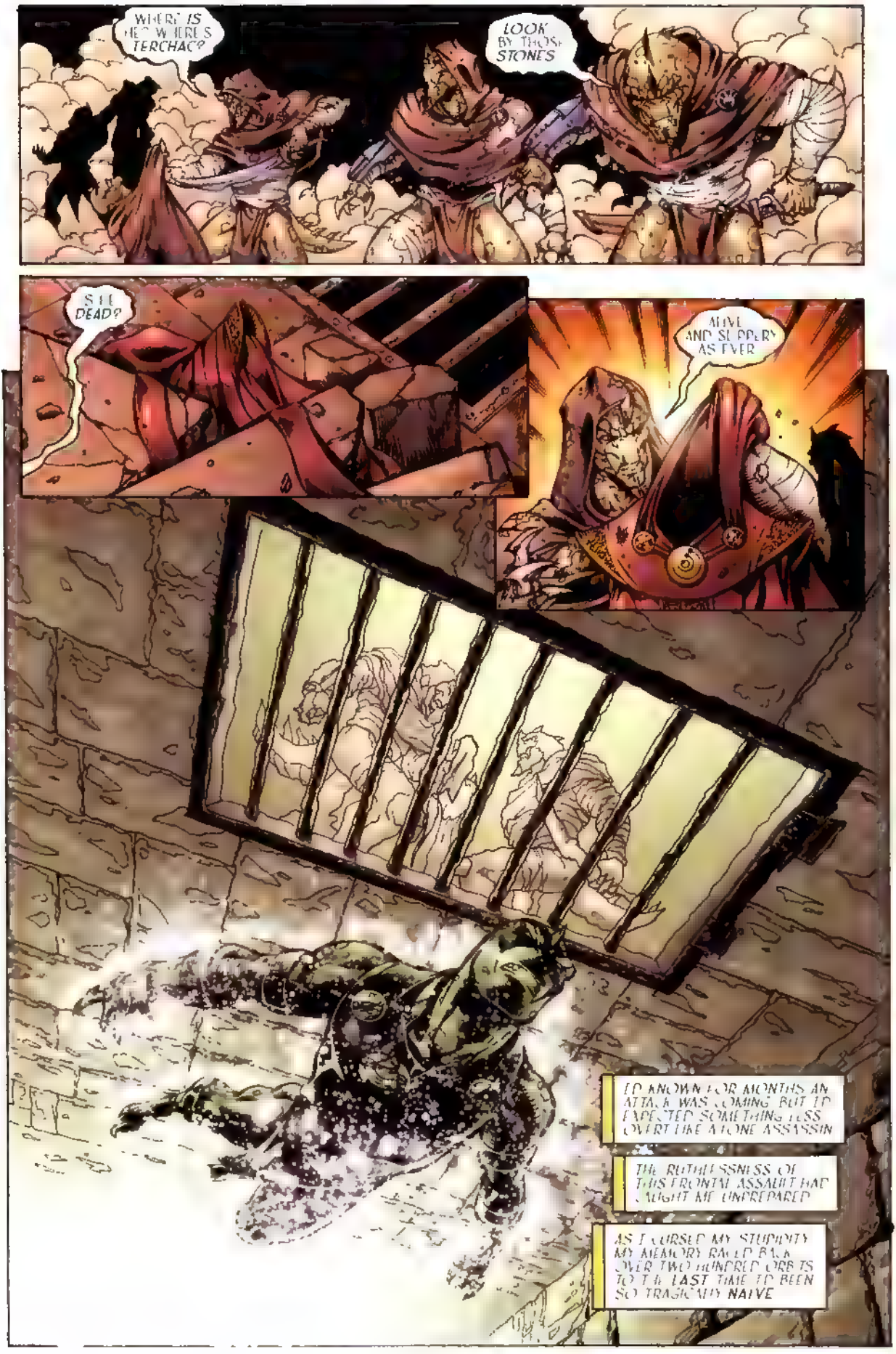
SAURIANS™: UNNATURAL SELECTION Vol. 1, Issue 2, MARCH 2002. FIRST PRINTING. Published by CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. Office of publication: 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, Florida 34677. **CrossGen®, CrossGen Comics®, CrossGeneration®,** and **CrossGeneration Comics®** are registered trademarks of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. **Saurians™, Sigil™, the CrossGen sigil™,** and all prominent characters are ™ and © 2002 CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. The entire contents of this book are ™ and © 2002 CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. The stories, incidents, and characters in this publication are fictional. Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reproduced in any form without the express written consent of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

All combat is deception,
Feint and parry, bait and thrust,
Wise are warriors who can find
Rivals worthy of their trust.
The Song of Khyalhtua
AS A NEOPHYTE INFINITY SCHOLAR, I THOUGHT I KNEW WHAT THAT SCRIPTURE MEANT. THEN CAME THE WAR WITH THE HUMANS.
AND AFTER I FOUGHT THE ENEMY, AFTER I TASTED THEIR TREACHERY, AND FOUNDED THE CHURCH OF TRANSFORMATION BASED ON THE BITTER LESSONS I'D LEARNED...
...THAT SCRIPTURE MEANT SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.
TWO CENTURIES LATER, WHEN THE ANCIENT ORDER OF KHYALHTUA SOUGHT TO STAMP OUT MY HERETICAL CHURCH, ITS MEANING WOULD CHANGE FOR ME YET AGAIN.
BUT THAT'S THE MIRACLE OF THE HOLY WRIT. ITS TRUTH CONTINUES TO EVOLVE, EVEN AS I DO.

YOU ALL KNOW MY TESTAMENT
WHEN FIRST WE WARRED WITH THE HUMANS THE PROPHET WAS BUT A SOLDIER STRANDED ON A SAVAGE WORLD WITH THREE OF THE ENEMY
THE WICKED MAMMALS DECEIVED THE PROPHET OFFERING FRIENDSHIP EVEN AS THEY SET HIM AGAINST HIS SAURIAN BROTHERS
ONLY AFTER MISTAKENLY SLAYING HIS FELLOW FIGHTERS DID HE SMITE THE HUMANS IN THEIR TURN
YES, BUT BY THEN STARVATION WAS UPON ME. I AM ONLY HERE TODAY BECAUSE I FORCED MYSELF TO DEVOUR ONE OF MY FALLEN FOES
WHEN I SAW THE CHANGE IT BROUGHT UPON ME... MY SAURIAN FLESH REMAKING ITSELF IN THE IMAGE OF MAMMALS - I WAS HORRIFIED
FEAR BOWS TO WISDOM. CHANGE MUST BE EMBRACED
TRUE. BUT IT TOOK ME TIME TO REALIZE THIS. MANY OUTSIDE THESE WALLS STILL FEAR THE CHANGE WE REPRESENT
THEY SAY WE CORRUPT SAURIAN PERFECTION

WE KNOW THE TRUTH
NOW RECEIVE THE SALVATION OF OUR PEOPLE
FROM OUR BITTEREST ENEMIES WE SEIZE OUR FINEST WEAPONS
AMEN
ARM PLASMA CANNONS. FIRE ON MY MARK
WE CELEBRATE THE COMMUNION OF DOMINANT SPECIES
THE TRANSMOGRIFICATION OF BASE HUMAN FLESH INTO SANCTIFIED SAURIAN

ZARK
ZAZZZ
KA-BOOM
ZZARK
MONSTERS!
FREAKS!
MAINTAIN YOUR FOCUS, MEN! LOCATE THE PRIME TARGET!


WHERE IS HE? WHERE'S TERCHAC?
LOOK BY THOSE STONES
STILL DEAD?
ALIVE AND SLIPPERY AS EVER
I'D KNOWN FOR MONTHS AN ATTACK WAS COMING BUT I'D EXPECTED SOMETHING LESS OVERT LIKE A LONE ASSASSIN
THE RUTHLESSNESS OF THIS FRONTAL ASSAULT HAD CAUGHT ME UNPREPARED
AS I CURSED MY STUPIDITY MY MEMORY RACED BACK OVER TWO HUNDRED ORBITS TO THE LAST TIME I'D BEEN SO TRAGICALLY NAIVE

I HAD COME HOME FROM THE WAR IN SHACKLES... THE FREAK WHO'D **EATEN** A HUMAN WAS NOW **TURNING INTO** ONE

MY DESPERATE ACT BROUGHT TO LIGHT AN EVOLUTIONARY ADAPTATION WE HAD LONG FORGOTTEN. OUR ABILITY TO **ABSORB** PHYSICAL TRAITS FROM THE ANIMALS WE CONSUME

SINCE WE HAD ABSORBED ALL WE NEEDED FROM THE OTHER SPECIES ON TCHARUN EONS AGO, SAURIAN PHYSIOLOGY REMAINED UNCHANGED UNTIL I DEVOURED **ALIEN** FLESH

THE SCIENTISTS COULDN'T GET ENOUGH OF ME. MY CASE WAS A **REVELATION**. THEY SLICED AND SAMPLED ME FOR **YEARS**, EVEN FORCING ME TO CONSUME **MORE** ENEMY FLESH

IN TIME, THEY LEARNED HOW THE INGESTION METAMORPHOSIS WORKED AND HOW TO **ACCELERATE** THE RESULTS

IT WAS THEIR LAST DITCH EFFORT TO ACHIEVE A BALANCE OF POWER IN THE ALL BUT LOST WAR AGAINST THE HUMANS AND IT **WORKED**

MORE CAPTURED HUMANS WERE FED TO MORE TEST SUBJECTS LIKE MYSELF WITH HUMAN GUILE AND INNOVATION WE MADE **BREAK THROUGHS** IN WEAPONS AND PROPULSION TECHNOLOGY

FROM OUR HIDDEN TESTING FACILITY WE SECRETLY SAVED THE SAURIAN RACE FROM **CONQUEST**

BUT THE ONLY WAY I SURVIVED THOSE TORTUROUS YEARS WITH MY SANITY INTACT WAS TO MAKE PEACE WITH THE **SCIENCE** BEHIND THE BLOODBATH ALL AROUND ME

I SPREAD TO THE OTHERS MY BELIEF THAT OUR EVOLUTION WAS A GIFT OF VICTORY FROM MIGHTY KHYAHTUA GODDESS OF WAR. IT WAS THE START OF A NEW FAITH ON TCHARUN

AND A CLASH OF CULTURES THAT TURNED MY FORMER TEACHER INTO MY GREATEST ENEMY... THE FOE WHO SLAUGHTERED MY CONGREGATION

WEAPONSMASTER BRUKKAN HOLY FATHER OF THE ORDER OF KOVA-TRIA

WHAT ARE THE THREE KEYS TO VICTORY?

FOCUS! PATIENCE! CONTROL!

Heh EASY TO SAY

BUT HARD TO EMBODY

ARE YOU PREPARED TO SHOW ME THE MEANING OF THE WAR GODDESS LESSON?

YES, WEAPONSMASTER!

Hmm. No PATIENCE

SHRANG

AHHH!

NO OUCH

KCHANG

BE THANKFUL I HAVE CONTROL

IT'S A FLEETING THING CONTROL

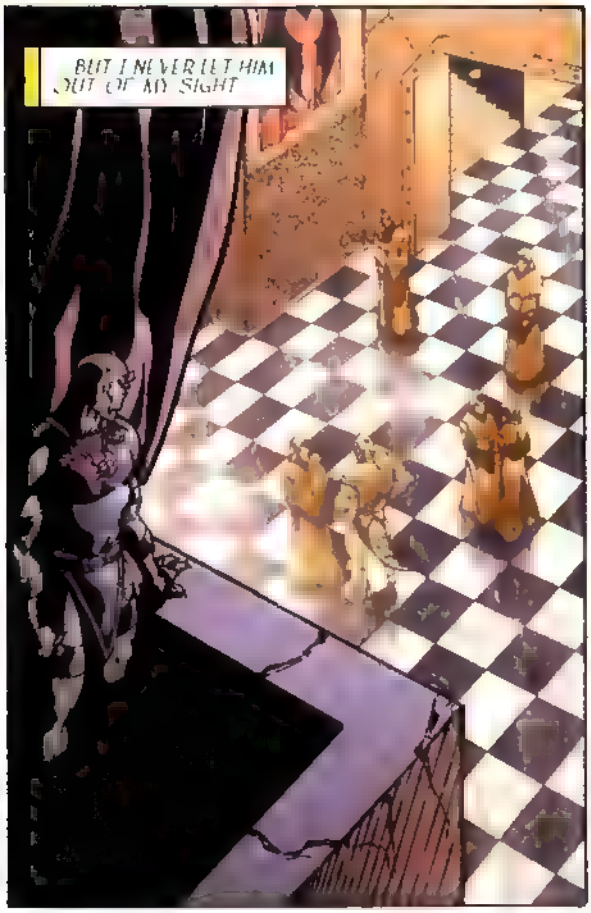
YOU ALMOST ACHIEVED IT OVER ME TODAY YOU SHOULD HAVE HAD MORE PATIENCE
TERCHAC! YOU ALWAYS WERE OVERLY DRAMATIC, EVEN AS AN ACOLYTE
WEAPONSMASTER!
STAND DOWN!
SMART MOVE. YOUR THROAT WOULD BE WIDE OPEN BEFORE THEY TOOK TWO STEPS
I DON'T NEED MY SERPENTS TO DEAL WITH YOU, HERETIC
LEAVE US! AND TELL NO ONE OF THIS! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
Y-YES, WEAPONSMASTER
DO YOU KNOW WHY YOUR CHURCH HAS TO GO TERCHAC? BECAUSE YOU POSE A GRAVER THREAT TO THE FUTURE OF THARUN THAN THE HUMANS EVER DID
JUST AS WE CAN RE-GROW LOST LIMBS, SO DO THE GODS REWARD US WHEN WE DIE WITH THE MIRACLE OF REINCARNATION
TELL ME HOW THE GODS -- WHO CREATED US IN THEIR IMAGE -- CAN ALLOW US THE CYCLE OF RENEWAL IF YOU PERVERT THE SACRED FORM THEY GAVE US?
SOON, KHYALHTHA WILL PUNISH ALL THE DEAD OF THARUN FOR YOUR SINS

YOU UNDERESTIMATE THE GODS *NOTHING* HAPPENS WITHOUT THEIR *WILLING* IT
WEAPONSMASTER ?
BE GONE, *CHRCHOK* I HAVE THIS SITUATION UNDER CONTROL
YOU COULDN'T BE ANY MORE *WRONG* HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE *TRUTH* GOT OUT ABOUT HOW WE *REALLY* RETOOK THE INITIATIVE IN THE WAR?
THOSE WARRIORS OF YOURS A... THINK IT WAS THE WAR GODDESS HERSELF WHO TIPPED THE SCALES BACK IN OUR FAVOR
IF THEY FOUND OUT THEY OWE IT ALL TO *ABOMINATIONS* LIKE ME, WE'D SOON HAVE A CIVIL WAR ON OUR HANDS. THARUN WOULD BE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF AND EASY PICKINGS FOR THE MAMMALS
THAT IS WHAT YOU RISKED BY ATTACKING MY CONGREGATION STARTING A HOLY WAR AGAINST ME WILL DOOM US *BOTH*
ATTACKING YOU? I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT

LIAR!
AHH... I SWEAR I'VE MADE NO MOVE AGAINST YOU BUT LET ME FIND OUT WHO DID
LET ME LEAD YOU TO THEM PERHAPS WE CAN STILL KEEP YOUR SECRET AND OUR WORLD ON TRACK TO VICTORY AGREED?
I THOUGHT BACK TO THE LAST TIME I ALLIED MYSELF WITH AN ENEMY COULD IT POSSIBLY END AS BADLY THIS TIME AROUND?
NO IT COULD NOT I KNEW WHAT I HAD TO DO
WISE ARE WARRIORS WHO CAN FIND RIVALS WORTHY OF THEIR TRUST
VERY WELL HRUKKAN, I... GRANT YOU THE CHANCE TO PROVE YOUR GOOD FAITH MAY THIS PARTNERSHIP LEAD US TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR ALL SAURIANS
BELIEVE ME TERIHAC
I... MAKE CERTAIN THAT IT DOES

HRUKKAN SPENT THE REST OF THAT FATEFUL DAY VISITING CONTACT AFTER CONTACT PAIN STAKING TO FERRETING OUT THE IDENTITY OF WHOEVER HAD ORDERED THE DESTRUCTION OF MY CHURCH

I SOMEHOW KEEP CLOSE ENOUGH TO HEAR EVERYTHING THAT WAS SAID

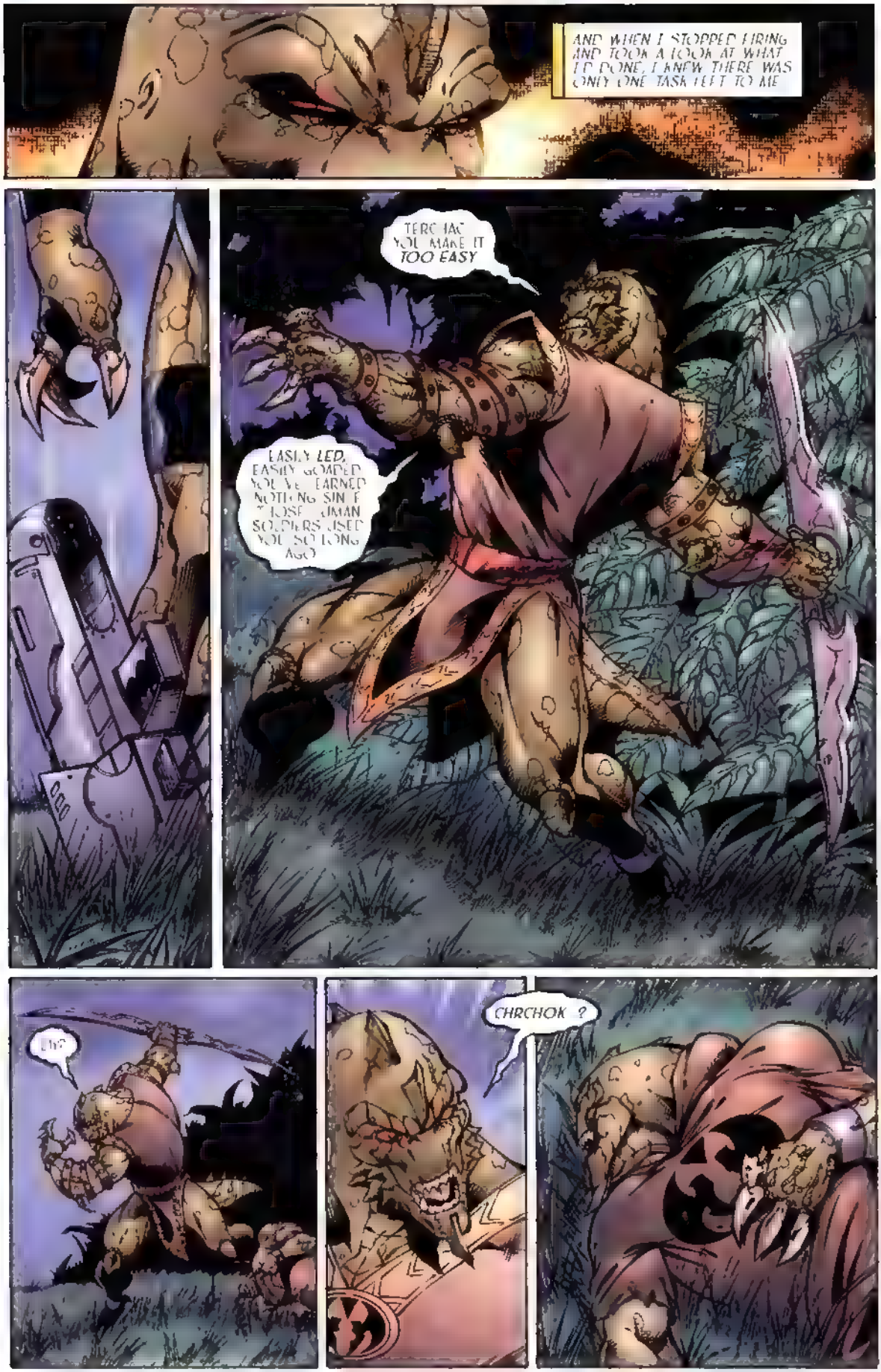

BUT I NEVER LET HIM OUT OF MY SIGHT

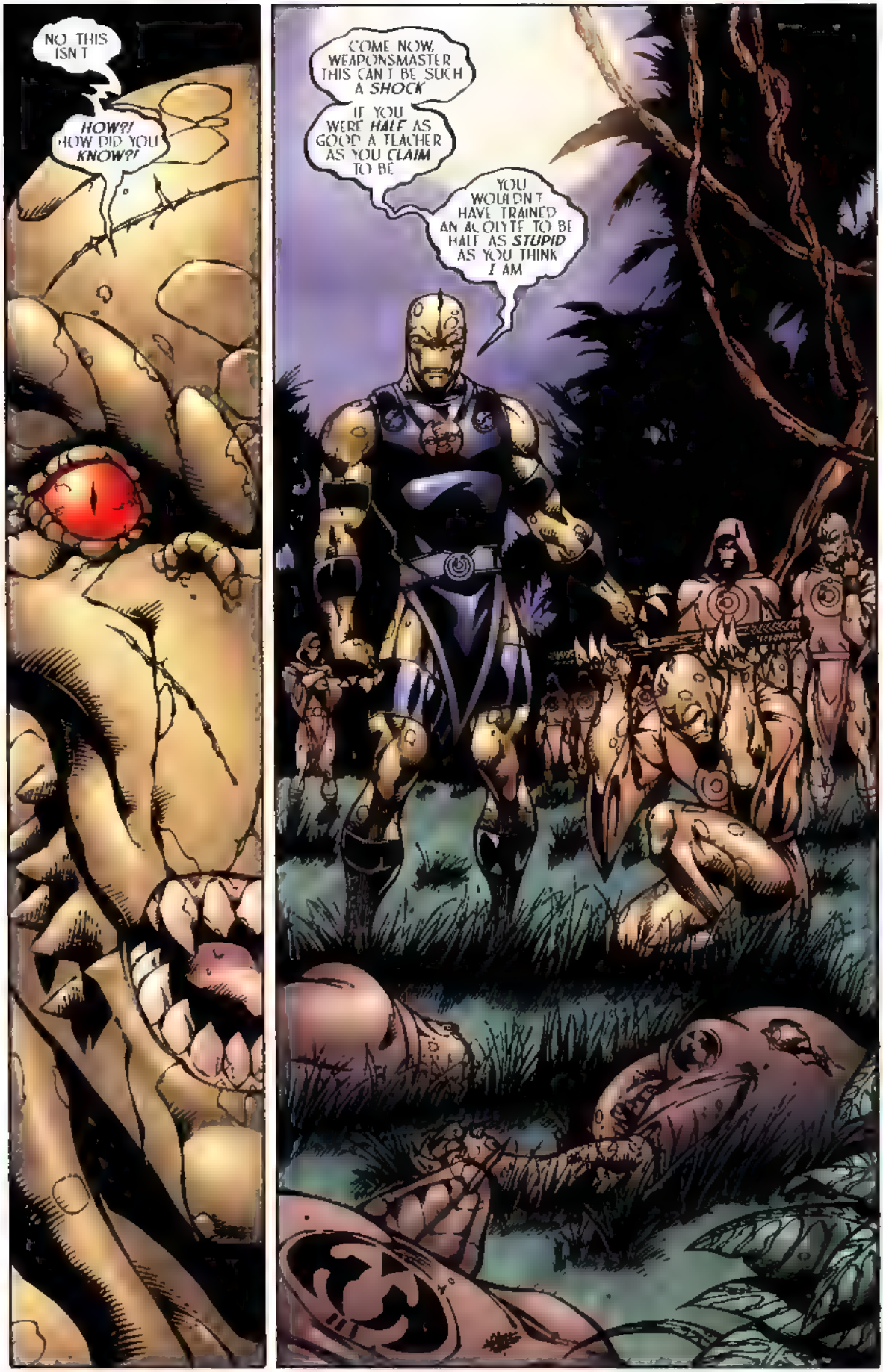
AND I MUST ADMIT HAVING THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL LEADER ON ALL OF TCHARUN AS MY PERSONAL ERRAND BOY GAVE ME NO END OF SATISFACTION

IN TIME HE LEARNED THAT THE FACTION WHICH STRUCK AGAINST ME WAS GATHERING FOR A SECRET MEETING THAT VERY NIGHT
WE CREPT OUT TO THE APPOINTED PLACE, INTENT ON DESTROYING THOSE WHO HAD SOUGHT TO START A CIVIL WAR. OUR MUTUAL INTERESTS WERE CLEAR ENOUGH THAT I ALLOWED HRUKKAN TO ARM HIMSELF WITH A ZAKRI
IN THE HANDS OF THE WEAPONSMASTER THE DOUBLE BLADED WEAPON WAS DEADLIER THAN ANY ORDNANCE WE WERE LIKELY TO FACE
NEVERTHELESS, I BROUGHT ALONG A PLASMA RIFLE, AS FORTUNE RARELY FAVORS THE OVERCONFIDENT
WE'RE HER

ALRIGHT, LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH
NO TERC'TAK
I WON'T HAVE THE HUMAN TAINT THAT CLOUDS YOUR JUDGMENT RUINING OUR ATTACK
THIS IS TOO IMPORTANT TO LET YOU RUN OFF HALF-COCKED WE'LL DO THIS MY WAY
I AM NOT ONE OF YOUR ACOLYTES ANYMORE. YOU LOST YOUR RIGHT TO ORDER ME AROUND TWO ENTURIES AGO
TRY NOT TO BE SUCH AN IDIOT FOR ONCE
I'M GOING TO FLANK THEM AND ATTACK FROM ANOTHER ANGLE SO DO NOT MAKE A MOVE UNTIL I GIVE THE SIGNAL. UNDERSTAND?
THE TRUTH IS THAT EVEN AFTER ALL THIS TIME, HRUKKAN KNEW ME BETTER THAN MOST
HE PLAYED ON MY RESENTMENT AND STUBBORN INDEPENDENCE, AND EVEN THOUGH IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT HE WAS PUSHING MY BUTTONS

FORLORNLY TOOK THE BAIT
DIE, MURDERERS!
CHOOM
CHOOM
CHOOM
THIS IS FOR MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS!
THIS IS FOR THE NEW FACE OF TCHARUN!

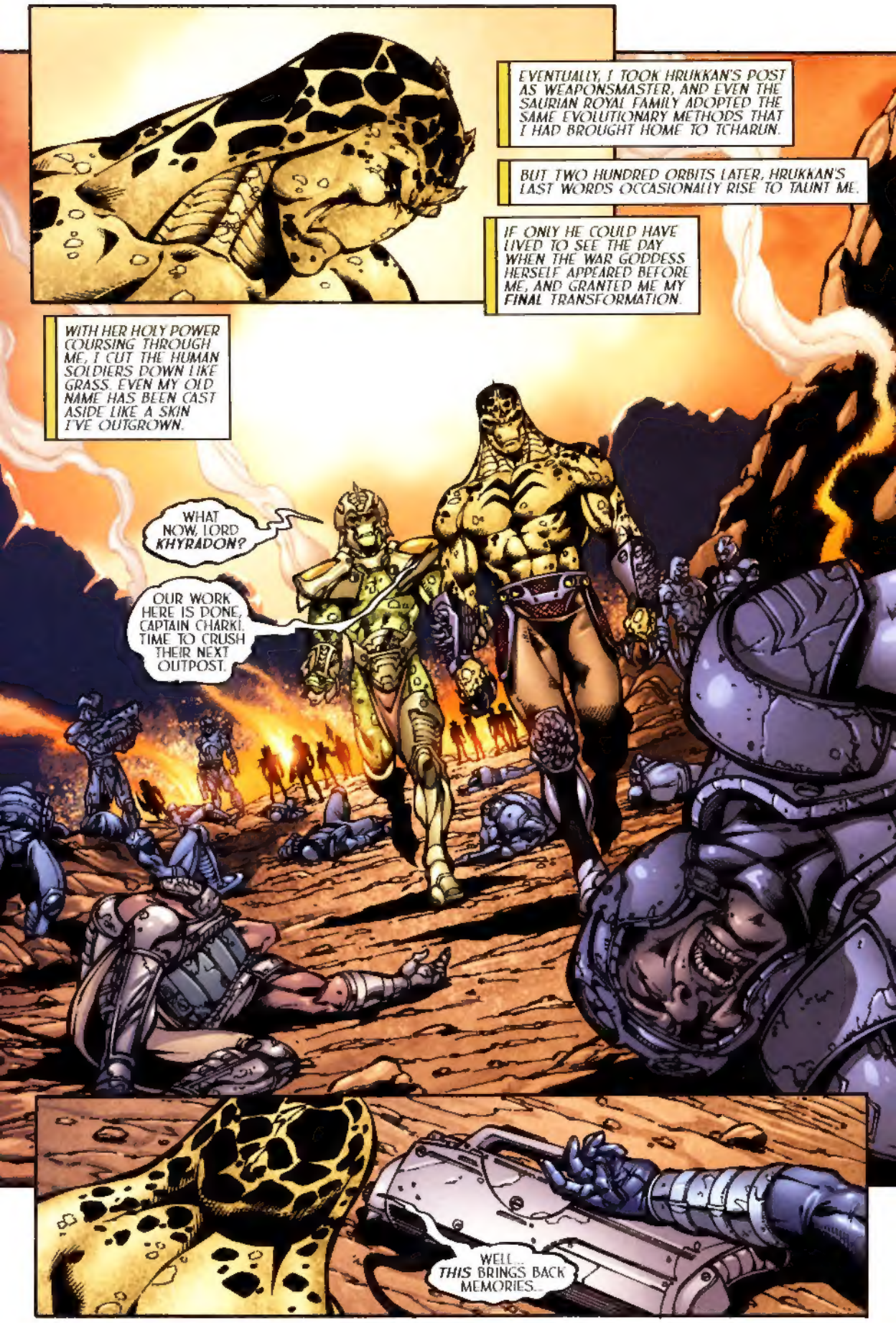

AND WHEN I STOPPED FIRING AND TOOK A LOOK AT WHAT I'D DONE, I KNEW THERE WAS ONLY ONE TASK LEFT TO ME
TERC HAC YOU MAKE IT TOO EASY
EASILY LED, EASILY SCOPED YOU'VE EARNED NOTHING SINCE THOSE HUMAN SOLDIERS USED YOU SO LONG AGO
Eh?
CHRCHOK ?


NO. THIS ISN'T
HOW?! HOW DID YOU KNOW?!
COME NOW, WEAPONSMASTER THIS CAN'T BE SUCH A SHOCK
IF YOU WERE HALF AS GOOD A TEACHER AS YOU CLAIM TO BE
YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TRAINED AN ACOLYTE TO BE HALF AS STUPID AS YOU THINK I AM

OF COURSE I KNEW THIS WOULD BE A SET UP
HRUKKAN HAD BEEN TELLING HIS CONTACTS TO CAPTURE MY OWN KEY DISCIPLES AND BRING THEM TO THIS CLEARING
SO THAT I COULD BE TRICKED INTO KILLING THEM MYSELF
INSTEAD, I WENT IN DELIBERATELY AIMING FOR HRUKKAN'S MEN WHO WERE HIDDEN IN THE TREES
HRUKKAN'S FURY UNBALANCED HIM. I PASSED UP SEVERAL OPENINGS, ALLOWING HIM TO REGAIN HIS FOCUS
HE WAS LASHING OUT IN BLIND RAGE, LIKE A WOUNDED BEAST. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A SIN TO FINISH HIM OFF IN SUCH A SORRY STATE

I WANT YOU TO KNOW BEFORE YOU DIE THAT I NEVER ABANDONED THE FAITH YOU TAUGHT ME
THE SONG OF KHAGATUA HAS GUIDED MY EVERY STEP
I ACCEPTED YOUR HELP BECAUSE I KNEW I COULD COUNT ON YOUR TREACHERY
HUFF - HUFF - WISE ARE WARRIORS HUFF - WHO CAN FIND HUFF RIVALS WORTHY HUFF OF THEIR TRUST
NOW WHO'S THE TEACHER?
RRAHHHH!
FINAL LESSON
HKK

TECHAC HEAR MY FINAL CONFESSION
YES, WEAPONSMASTER
WHATEVER MAY HAVE PASSED BETWEEN US, NO SAURIAN WITH A SHRED OF HONOR WOULD IGNORE HIS VICTIMS DYING WORDS.
I LOVED YOU ONCE LIKE A SON. I FELT BETRAYED BY THE CHANGES IN YOU.
BUT THAT IS NOT WHY I HATE YOU. I WANT YOU DEAD BECAUSE I HATE MYSELF.
ALL THIS TIME I HAVE DENIED THE TRUTH THAT I KNEW IN MY HEARTS.
OVER THE DECADES, MY CONVICTION THAT SAURIANS ARE SUPERIOR TO HUMANS GRADUALLY GAVE WAY TO THE REALIZATION
THAT WITHOUT THE SOFT, WEAK, TREACHEROUS MAMMAL SCUM
WE WOULD NEVER HAVE EVOLVED ENOUGH TO SURVIVE THIS ASH.


EVENTUALLY, I TOOK HRUKKAN'S POST AS WEAPONSMASTER, AND EVEN THE SAURIAN ROYAL FAMILY ADOPTED THE SAME EVOLUTIONARY METHODS THAT I HAD BROUGHT HOME TO TCHARUN.
BUT TWO HUNDRED ORBITS LATER, HRUKKAN'S LAST WORDS OCCASIONALLY RISE TO TAUNT ME.
IF ONLY HE COULD HAVE LIVED TO SEE THE DAY WHEN THE WAR GODDESS HERSELF APPEARED BEFORE ME, AND GRANTED ME MY FINAL TRANSFORMATION.
WITH HER HOLY POWER COURSING THROUGH ME, I CUT THE HUMAN SOLDIERS DOWN LIKE GRASS. EVEN MY OLD NAME HAS BEEN CAST ASIDE LIKE A SKIN I'VE OUTGROWN.
WHAT NOW, LORD KHYRADON?
OUR WORK HERE IS DONE, CAPTAIN CHARKI. TIME TO CRUSH THEIR NEXT OUTPOST.
WELL... THIS BRINGS BACK MEMORIES...

A FLAMETHROWER. I USED ONE OF THESE IN MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE HUMANS.
I THOUGHT AT THE TIME THAT IT WAS THE WORST MISTAKE OF MY LIFE, BUT IN FACT IT TAUGHT ME SOMETHING VITAL...
"...THE VERY SAME WISDOM I PASSED ON TO WEAPONSMASTER HRUKKAN AS HIS FINAL LESSON."
CAN YOU GUESS WHAT THAT LESSON WAS, CAPTAIN?
KLAK
I HAVE NO NEED TO GUESS, LORD KHYRADON. I RECITE IT EVERY TIME I RECEIVE COMMUNION...
"FROM OUR BITTEREST ENEMIES WE SEIZE OUR FINEST WEAPONS."
VERY GOOD, CAPTAIN. LET'S GO MAKE SURE THE REST OF HUMANITY LEARNS IT THE HARD WAY

Mark
WAID WITH
Tony
BEDARD
WRITERS
Andrea
DIVITO
PENCILER
Rob
HUNTER
INKER
Wil
QUINTANA
COLORIST
Dave
LANPHEAR
Troy
PETERI
LETTERERS
The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa
Mark Alessi
Publisher & CEO
Gina M. Villa
Chief Operating Officer
Michael A. Beattie
Chief Financial Officer
Tony Panaccio
Vice President
Product Development
Brandon Peterson
Vice President
Production Control
Chris Oarr
Director of
Marketing & Sales
James Breitbeil
Director of
Marketing & Distribution
Ian M. Feller
Director of
Corporate Communications
Barbara Kesel
Head Writer
Bart Sears
Art Director
Pam Davies
Production Director
Sylvia Bretz
Janet Bechtle
Production Assistants
Dave Lanphear
Design Director
Troy Peteri
Design Assistant
Michelle Pugliese
Freelance Coordinator